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Heritage Practice MA *Interpretation and Representation* module (Tutor; Dr Emma Jayne-Abbot)
essay 1000 words

Trefriw Woollen Mills, Conwy, publicity leaflet for visitors.

Background

The Trefriw Woollen Mills' site is located in a small to medium village (Trefriw) situated on the river Crafnant in the Conwy valley, within Snowdonia National Park. The mill has a long history, a family of weavers who originated there from 1825. Near the town of Llanrwst in the Conwy valley, an attractive stretch of land and estuary with wooded areas and many interesting medieval historical sites. The tourist footfall is high in the region, people travel and stay on-route through the valley toward the main centres of Conwy and Llandudno, to the north-west is the university city of Bangor. The mix of old industrial past and modern buildings house a working mill and a visitor centre with restaurant and shop. The main commercial drive is the production and sale of original and new designs based on the 'Welsh blanket' which was popular during the 1700's and also said by some to be designed influenced by migrated groups to some North American regions.

The leaflet (in English)

On the front of the threefold glossy leaflet; the company name is printed and the words 'Welsh weavers, since 1859'. There is a background pattern from a Welsh blanket design in green and inserted within that a photograph of a weaver at work near a section of the loom's working parts. Underneath the photograph is the Welsh word 'Croeso' (Welcome) and underneath with capital letters, 'Weaving Demonstrations. Water Turbines. Working Mill Museum. Shop and Tearoom'. A band of colour at the base is a photograph of a bundle of coloured threads adding a burst of yellows greens and orange.

Opening out the leaflet; there are pattern examples down the sides of two of the pages and images of aesthetically arranged welsh blankets and bedspreads in furniture settings and on shop shelves. The beauty of the colours and pattern capture the essence of the product. Another page shows a loom with interaction from a person with an oil can aimed at the workings of the machine, adding an industrial touch for those interested in the details of the looms. The demonstrations are advertised again, to engage the visitor with an ongoing series of educative events. Other items for sale are mentioned, sheepskin-wear, rugs, and knitwear, a reminder of the tea room and on the back directions, supporting information and an online website.

The cultural content

The leaflet presents the mill buildings as an established Welsh family weaving industry which can be described as part of the tangible heritage of Wales and indeed Britain. The locality has its origins in the 'home grown', cottage industries, small factory and local employer as a family business. These kinds of business were prolific in the Welsh valleys and mid and northern Welsh towns during most of the past history due to their ability to utilize the energy from the rivers, to drive the wheels and turbines of the mechanical looms. Water was used in the various detailed stages of cloth making, dyeing, washing and other techniques. Of interest from a heritage aspect is the combination of cultural heritage, the tangible heritage of the solid industrial buildings and industry working with the intangible, ie the 'culture' of the Welsh blanket and it's unique range of designs which are a rich part of the welsh cultural milieu. It has a familiarity to people throughout Britain historically and is now marketed and modernised (or an old one can be of high value) The deigns are presented to tourists globally from this site and others.

The continuation of the designs as a modern shopping experience means that the publicity for this kind of heritage visiting experience is aimed to engage with the tourist and with the local. Thus the education and repeating workshops, the cafe and shop for weekend visitors are designed for frequent visits too.

The weaving demonstrations allow the visitor to engage more deeply with the intangible cultural aspect and background of the designs, they may be educated that the Welsh blanket has a history reaching far back and that sometimes migration groups exhibit their own welsh items abroad in countries such as Canada and parts of North and South America (Patagonia) and Australia.

The Welsh blanket (I'm using the term for bedspreads and cushions as well) is collected by museums and antique outlets. They have become collectors items alongside Welsh quilts which have a similar history, focused on domestic social history.

Why is it important to keep these specific cultural designs alive? In a heritage context an idea might be that it reignites emotions in people of past, often their own past, and so the object becomes more attractive to possess, possibly the second time around for some and no doubt the first for many who missed the first popular round of the blanket, to them it is 'new' but 'old fashioned' modelled into the contemporary, Park mentions this in Heritage Tourism;

'heritage becomes constantly reconstructed and reinterpreted, (as discussed in chapt1) in an attempt to meet the specific demands of tourists and reflect the socio-cultural changes of the contemporary world' (Hyung Yu Park, Heritage Tourism, 2014).

The visitors and their emotional connection to the site, its product, the buildings and their memories of blanket designs could lead the local or the migrated person back to a sense of 'home' an anchored, maybe quieter 'place' in our fast moving modern world.

This is an important emotion for migrated groups, imagine the visitor from abroad aiming to fulfil this sense of belonging through visits and purchases of the item, bringing a feeling of comfort, pride, nationality, and connection, especially on a local scale having visited the site and spoken with the people working there. Whether the emotion feeds the industry or vice-versa is an interesting debate in itself.

Nevertheless, a counter argument could be presented, that the tourism industry is capable of sanitising and almost destroying the perceived 'real' history of a place, by pre-packaging and systematically representing it,

'commodified heritage is often criticised as a denigrated version of history which fails to capture the essence of the nation's cultural and social identities' (Hewison 1987, quote from Heritage Tourism, Park, 2014).

The benefit of the end product, with the working process used as part of the visitor experience, is to create authenticity. Since most of the designs are from original source and combined with the buildings as local industrial heritage, the visitor experience is quite close to seeing the original industry. There is room for commercial transition into new products made from older or new designs which strengthen the attraction of place and product. To return to the point of authenticity and perhaps the context of the intangible working within the tangible, since one of the categories of UNESCO's groups of intangible heritage is *'traditional craftsmanship'*. (source The Politics of Heritage, Chapt. World Heritage, ed, Harrison, 2010)

To conclude, this is a self contained example of heritage representation, a family business, building heritage and textile and cultural heritage which all have in common continuation through history, maybe too much of a 'pastiche' of this particularly placed woollen mill would be unnecessary and unauthentic. A reminder of this, in the wording, of the established, 'Welsh weavers since 1859'.

Bibliography;

An Historical Overview of the Preparation of the UNESCO International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Noriko Aikawa
Social Construction of the Past, Bond, G and Gillam, A. (pgs 1-24)

Understanding the Politics of Heritage, Rodney Harrison, Manchester University Press, 2010

Welsh Quilts, Jen Jones, 2017 Poetry Wales Press

Heritage Tourism, Hyung Yu Park, Chapter; *Heritage Marketing* Chapter 8 pg's 145-49

A History of Heritage, (Chapter 1) West, S and Jaqueline, A.

Images:



Visit Trefriw Woollen Mills for unique woollen products manufactured on site starting with the raw wool.

Our pure wool products include traditional Welsh bedspreads, travel rugs, tweeds & Welsh "tapestry" by the metre.

Our fabrics are made up into ladies' garments, hats, caps, bags, purses, dinner sets, cushions and throws which are exclusive to our shop and website. We operate the "Over the Counter VAT refund scheme".

We also stock a wide range of pure wool knitwear and sheepskin rugs, slippers, hats and gloves.

Locally made cakes, scones, bara brith and Welsh cakes are served in our tearoom where a video showing the various processes in wool production can be viewed.

We are a small family business with one outlet operated by the Williams family since 1859 and situated in the centre of Trefriw in the picturesque Conwy Valley on the edge of the Snowdonia National Park.

To request samples of our tapestry by the metre, also available in throws, cushions and dinner sets, please tick the patterns to the left.

Welsh weavers since 1859

TREFRIW

woollen mills

Visitors are welcome to take a self guided tour of our mill museum. Most of our machinery is over fifty years old.

The water driven turbine which generates our electricity can be viewed all year within shop hours.

Weaving can be viewed mid February to mid December (Monday to Friday), and additional machinery such as carding engines and spinning mules can be viewed Easter - October (Monday to Friday).

An educative visit for all ages.

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MAIL ORDER

To request samples please tick the patterns. Bedspread patterns below, small patterns overleaf.

Bedspread patterns (also in throws & cushions)

- ☐ T3 18
- ☐ T3 94
- ☐ T3 21

MAIL ORDER

To request samples please tick the patterns. Bedspread patterns below, small patterns overleaf.

Bedspread patterns (also in throws & cushions)

- ☐ T3 18
- ☐ T3 94
- ☐ T3 21
- ☐ T3 22A
- ☐ T3 2
- ☐ T3 14
- ☐ T3 8
- ☐ T3 23A

Your name

Address

VISIT US 2017

Shop and turbine open:
 Mon - Sat all year
 Summer: 9.30am - 5.30pm
 Winter: 10.00am - 5.00pm
 Sundays: Easter - Oct 10.00am - 5.00pm
 Closed Dec 25, 26 & Jan 1

Weaving can be viewed:
 Feb 20 - mid Dec
 Monday - Friday except Bank Holidays
 10am - 1pm & 2pm - 5pm

Mill Museum:
 (carding engines, spinning mules etc.)
 April 10 - Oct 27
 Monday - Friday except Bank Holidays
 10am - 1pm & 2pm - 5pm

Hand spinning:
 April 17, 19 & 20
 May 29 & 31, Aug 28
 June - Sept: Wed & Thurs

Rag Rug Making:
 April 18, May 30
 June - Sept: Tuesdays

Weaver's Garden:
 (dye plants)
 June - Sept

FREE ADMISSION
 (Regret no school parties)
 For accessibility statement visit website.

To find us: from A55; exit June 19, follow A470, turn right at Tal-y-Cafn (B5279), cross valley, left onto B5106.

From Betws-y-Coed: B5106 across stone bridge. We are in the centre of Trefriw on the main road.

Bus Route 19: from Llandudno & Conwy to Llanrwst & Betws-y-Coed
www.traveline.cymru

Tel: 01492 640462
info@t-w-m.co.uk
www.t-w-m.co.uk

Trefriw Woollen Mills Ltd.,
 Main Road, Trefriw,
 Conwy Valley LL27 0NQ

TREFRIW

woollen mills

Welsh weavers since 1859

CROESO

Weaving Demonstrations
 Water Turbine
 Working Mill Museum
 Shop & Tearoom

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